

WCASS Newsletter

WISCONSIN COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATORS OF SPECIAL SERVICES, LTD

Summer 2014



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2013-2014 President's Message

By: Greg Nyen

Servant Leadership

Servant Leadership is an ancient philosophy of leadership style that existed long before the essay written by Robert Greenleaf made it in vogue. It certainly has become a buzzword in educational circles of late and I can admit to including it in my rousing game of school board bingo as well. As Directors of Special Education, or whatever else you want to call us, there are many characteristics that set us apart from our cabinet-level counterparts. Many of these characteristics, I believe, are consistent with the philosophy of servant leadership.

Some, but not all, of the characteristics are noted below. I have taken the liberty to imply a link to the positions we have all willfully sought.

- **Listening:** A servant leader (hereafter: special education director) realizes the importance of listening to others while at or away from the IEP team table.
- **Empathy:** A special education director understands the needs and feelings of parents who hear for the first time that their child is a child with a disability.
- **Healing:** A special education director helps foster each child's academic, social/emotional or cognitive growth no matter where they began.
- **Awareness:** A special education director understands how an entire team of support professionals can achieve the best possible outcome for students with disabilities.
- **Persuasion:** A special education director influences the board through their persuasiveness in order to support and advocate for students.

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- **Conceptualization:** A special education director sees the department for what it is as well as what it can be.
- **Foresight:** A special education director has a well-developed sense of how educational initiatives of the past, present and future are connected.
- **Stewardship:** A special education director is a good steward of the taxpayer's dollar.
- **Commitment to the Growth of People:** A special education director is committed to the growth of others, be they students or staff.

- **Building Community:** A special education director understands that his/her staff are stronger collectively than as individuals.

As special education directors we ARE servant leaders. We have good reason to be proud of our profession. I am proud to have been President of WCASS for the past two years and am proud to know many of you! Thank you for the opportunity to serve you. I wish you all a relaxing summer spent with people and events you enjoy most.

Special Thanks to the 2014 WCASS Winter Conference sponsors!

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2013-2014 Past-President's Comments

By: David Kwiatkowski

I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH!

With the writing of this newsletter article, I will have completed the last official duty of my six years of service as your WCASS President-Elect, President and Past-President. It has been a true privilege and a remarkable experience to work with you and for you in our vital and vibrant organization for the benefit of students with disabilities in Wisconsin! I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for that opportunity, so... Thank You! (OK! Now imagine this going on for 335 more times, once for each of our 360 members! Get the idea?)

Now, if I did find the opportunity to say thank you to each and every one of you, personally or in type, it still wouldn't be enough to really express my gratitude for these opportunities! It would also

especially fall short in satisfying my desire to "pay it forward" through the encouragement and mentoring of other WCASS members to seek the same sort of professional enhancement! That is why I was delighted when our new WCASS President, Kurt Eley, invited me to continue to serve on the WCASS Executive Board as Membership Chair. Even more exciting has been our conversations around our common interest in making "leadership development" a priority for that committee of the Board! So, as I complete my final communication to you as an elected leader for WCASS, I look forward to talking, writing, mentoring, encouraging and helping many of you to find the same satisfaction I found by being an active servant and leader in our organization! Please stay tuned for more details or if you know you are interested, contact me at your nearest convenience to start your own exciting journey!

And as, always ... Thanks (times 360) for listening!

Dave

Sequestration is returning. News from a recent visit to Washington, D.C. indicated that what seemed like a lull in sequestration issues is over. Soon there will be information sent to states and local districts regarding the impact on local allocations for education dollars. Kurt Eley, Dave Kwiatkowski, Brian Johnson and Gary Myrah participated in the CASE Leadership Summit and met with Wisconsin Senators and Congressmen and explained the need for full funding of IDEA. Currently ALL educational funding represents 1.5% of the federal budget.

Maintenance of Effort: OSEP continues to maintain their interpretation of the statutes regarding MOE, stating the only way to change it is to have a congressional action. Congressmen and senators acknowledge they have phone calls coming in from Wisconsin, yet it does not seem to be having great impact throughout the nation. Directors from Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota, and South Carolina have stated this is developing into a large problem in their states. The WCASS Board of Directors will be discussing how we may have impact in making a change at the summer retreat at the end of July. Contact Gary Myrah if you are interested in participating in a work team.



The Difference with the Current Fiscal Cliff: Executive Director Perspective

By: Gary Myrah

As one reviews the history of funding for public education, there have been multiple years with fiscal turbulence. It is rare that school administrators are able to prepare an annual budget with a budget surplus. Yet talented school administrators have been innovative in their methods for surviving the perpetual fiscal cliff.

At all times, but especially during times of tight financial resources, it is essential to promote the value of public education with the local taxpayers and to secure their support for the investment of local taxes. State and federal funding has fluctuated through the years and has offered opportunities to enhance programming or required local communities to pay for mandated elements of the educational programs. In years when the state or federal funding is reduced, the local tax payer faces the burden to maintain funding for mandated services/curriculum without decimating other elements of successful programs.

Veteran administrators that have experienced past cycles of funding may believe the current “fiscal cliff” is survivable. The impact of the federal sequestration appears to be softening, suggesting the long term impact may be less than originally anticipated. Yet many districts are facing increasing challenges in balancing their local budgets and erosion of public support from the increasing threat of private school vouchers.

The organized effort to have state legislation supporting private school vouchers or allowing for private school choice is changing the landscape of public school funding, making surviving the current fiscal cliff more challenging. The new threat of having statutory language to fund private institutions with tax dollars creates challenges that have not been experienced before. School administrators must be politically active and take a

stance to support public education.

There is a greater need to demonstrate the value of public education and the positive impact it has on all children. It is important to share the successes of the local school program by promoting student performance as well as point to successful graduates. Ideas may include:

- Establish a “Wall of Fame” in your high schools that features successful graduates and their current positions, especially if they are politicians. Pick an annual date for the celebration of honoring the latest candidate for the Wall.
- Invite the local newspaper photographer in for celebrations of student successes
- Encourage building principals to reach out to retired citizens to consider volunteering in schools. Many retired people are seeking opportunities to remain active. They will become your greatest supporters for initiatives in the district.
- Prepare articles in district newsletters that point out the local impact of a loss of state revenues to private schools.
- Collect data and share the positive economic impact public schools have on the local economy.

Many administrators have been humble and shy regarding the successes of their students, unless it is related to sports victories. The game is changing and PUBLIC education is no longer a given. We need to celebrate and promote the successes of all students and have as a goal to demonstrate the importance of a public education. The current fiscal cliff is survivable, only if the public believes in the value of public education. We must ensure that every educational tax dollar is used to ensure the continuance of a free appropriate public education.

WCASS Region News

Region 1 Chair: Mardi Freeman

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As I am writing this, the sun is finally shining and summer seems to have finally arrived. In Region #1 we have had a busy spring/summer! As most of you know by now the previous CESA #1 Director of Special Education, Barb Van Haren, has taken on the role of DPI's Director of Special Education. All of the 45 districts within CESA #1 thanked Barb for her dedication and eight years of service at our Annual Awards Banquet on April 10, 2014. She was presented with gifts made possible through donations by the directors.



We also celebrated the retirement of Jeanne Likes, from the Nicolet School District.

We also gathered to acknowledge the Region #1 Award Recipients for 2014:

Mainstream Teacher Award

- *Steve Seston, West Milwaukee Intermediate School (West Allis-West Milwaukee)
- *Karin Sundelius, Pilgrim Park Middle School (Elmbrook)

Pupil Services Team Award

- *Patricia Schuetz, RN (Elmbrook)
- *Andrew Taube, Pershing Elementary (West Allis-West Milwaukee)
- *Lisa Bartolone, School Psychologist (Germantown)

Special Education Teacher Award

- *Penny Huberty, Nathan Hale High School (West Allis-West Milwaukee)
- *Amy Marek, Irving Elementary (West Allis-West Milwaukee)
- *Christina Martello, West Milwaukee Intermediate School (West Allis-West Milw.)
- *Ann Kallio, Program Support (Elmbrook)

Special Education Para Award

- *Clint Girard, Brookfield East High School (Elmbrook)
- *Patricia Paschke, Burleigh Elementary (Elmbrook)

Related/Support Services Award

- *Sarah Bartosch, Speech Pathologist (West Allis-West Milwaukee)
- *Karen Kaltenbrun, Physical Therapist (Elmbrook)

Administrator

- *Tanya Fredrich, Director of Student Services (Elmbrook)
- *Mardi Freeman, Special Education Director (Hamilton)

Personal Achievement Award

- *Joseph (JJ) Klobukowski, Hamilton High School



Region #1 has other changes going on as well! Mardi Freeman is moving from the Hamilton School

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District to the role of the CESA #1 Director of Special Education and Pupil Services. John Peterson, (Fort Atkinson's Director of Special Education & Pupil Services until June 30th) is moving into the position of Hamilton School District Supervisor of Special Services. Jan Chapman is leaving the Germantown School District to move to Kewaskum's Director position (in CESA #2). We wish everyone the best of luck in their new roles.

Region 2 Chair: TBD

We are still in need of a Region 2 representative to replace John Peterson.

Region 3 Chair: Katherine Strong

kstrong@cesa3.k12.wi.us

For information from this region, please contact Katherine Strong.

Region 4 Chair: Marci Thiry

thiry@mjds.k12.wi.us

Region IV held its Spring Meeting & Awards on April 2nd, 2014. The WCASS members were pleased to honor the following: Matt Kaemmerer-Oshkosh School Psychologist, Mark Duerwachter-Kaukauna Superintendent, Maria Halbach-Menasha Autism Support Specialist, Jill Figgins-Menasha Assistive Technology Coordinator, Kathy Huddleston, Jill Williams and Iris Jacobsen-Oshkosh Program Support Teachers, Jamie Gundlach, Laura Lyke and Ariana Hones-Ripon High School students, and Barb Behlen-CESA 6 RSN.



In addition to a delightful lunch and awards, we had a presentation from a group of Ripon High School students who are providing natural supports for students with disabilities. These three young ladies were an example of what all of us hope for our school communities of the future. They have taken it upon themselves to create a group that supports students with disabilities in their high school. These girls saw a need and took the initiative to include students with disabilities in their social circle and to support them in the classroom. We were all motivated by these young ladies and believe having students like these walking our halls would create an environment where all students belong and everyone can succeed.

Region 5 Chair: Lisa Misco

lamisco@pulaskischools.org

Region 5 held a luncheon to celebrate the wonderful work and accomplishments of our students and educators on April 4th by recognizing our WCASS award recipients. Our winners for each category were:

Personal Achievement – Erik Johnson, a senior at Pulaski High School

Related/Support Services – Eunice Kamps, SLP from Crivitz

Pupil Services – Sandy Plummer, PT from CESA 8

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General Education Teacher Award – Rtl Team from Wrightstown-Angela Hammill, Kristin Higgins, and Julie Hubbard

Special Education Teacher – Lisa VanHefty of Mishicot

Special Education Paraprofessional – Tracy Slezewski of Southern Door

Administrator – Sherri Stengel of Ootsberg

Through their hard work and dedication these individuals have improved the quality of education for students with disabilities. We thank them for their service!

Region 6 Chair: Diane Knudsen

knudsend@esschools.k12.wi.us

For information from this region, please contact Diane Knudsen.

Region 7 Chair: Karen Baker

kbaker@ashland.k12.wi.us

I hope everyone is ready to enjoy some summer sun as opposed to the winter/spring snow that the northern region experienced. The Ashland area was the featured broadcasting site for the 2014 Blizzard-complete with Weather Station coverage. I can admit to even venturing down to the Marina to experience the Weather Channel forecasting as well as the blizzard winds!

Region 7 is pleased to announce that Ms. Tammy Nyen, Director of Special Education at the Wausau School District, was presented with the Region 7 Administrator Award on behalf of all she does to support the education of students with special needs. A surprise award presentation for Tammy was held at the Wausau District Office with office personnel present to share in her celebration. It was both an honor and a pleasure to be able to present this award to Tammy as she exemplifies the qualities of a model educator.

Judy Lodahl, Special Education Coordinator with the Wausau School District, nominated Tammy for this distinguished and deserving award. "Tammy has demonstrated great leadership in moving the Special Education Department of the Wausau School District (WSD) forward. Her positive attitude is contagious." Contributions were also submitted by Connie Zebro, Principal at A.C. Kiefer and the 4K/Early Childhood Coordinator. In her comments, Connie shared that, "Tammy has a relentless drive to support teachers in meeting the legal and educational requirements that students with disabilities are entitled to have." A veteran teacher shared that, "(Tammy) embraces change, promotes the growth of the professionals she mentors and is dedicated to facilitating the best educational practices for the students in the Wausau School District. Tammy leads by example." An additional special education teacher shared, "Tammy is an approachable administrator who has listened to numerous special education concerns over the years and has acted proactively."



Please share your congratulatory words with Tammy! We are fortunate, in Region 7, to have such an outstanding Administrator, Mentor, and Friend - Congratulations and Well Deserved Tammy Nyen!

CEC & CASE News

Special Election for President-Elect

Jim Heiden, Superintendent for the Cudahy School District (WI) was elected by the CEC membership to fill the vacancy in the position of President Elect. Jim was serving as CEC's treasurer and will become president of CEC on January 1st, 2015. In this election, 5.4% of the eligible voters participated. Jim has been a director of special education in the Milwaukee area for many years.

Executive Committee 2015 Board of Directors

Here is the [slate of candidates for the 2015 Board of Directors](#). The voting period is Sept. 29-Oct. 27, 2014. More information about the candidates will be available on the website later this summer. Your vote is a valuable member benefit that helps ensure continued effective leadership for the organization. **Please vote!** I (Gary Myrah) have heard from some of the CEC members that they do not participate in the election because they do not personally know the candidates. If you are one of these members, please reconsider your decision. The candidates work to provide the membership with a "snapshot" of their goals and vision for CEC. Please help us guide the future of CEC and participate in the election and encourage others to do the same. Tell your colleagues and help us get out the vote in 2014!

I would encourage all CASE members to cast a ballot this year and vote for the three candidates that have experience as CASE leaders. In the category of Member at Large, I am supporting three people Emily Collins, Mary Kealy and Phyllis Wolfram. I know all three of these individuals and know they will provide great leadership for CEC. It is critical to support our national organization at this time since public education and specifically special education has become a target of conservative groups that are attempting to reduce funding for public education.

Free Access to the Life Centered Education (LCE) Transition Curriculum and Assessment

Free trial access is available to the Council for Exceptional Children's web-based transition planning curriculum and assessment, Life Centered Education (LCE). Developed by a group of 18 authors, LCE is an evidence-based, nationally-normed curriculum designed to build real-life skills in:

- daily living,
- self-determination, and
- employment working with students at the middle and high school levels.

LCE contains over 450 assessment items and 1200 lesson plans aligned with the Common Core State Standards. To sign up for a free trial to LCE, please send an email to Anu Prabhala at anup@cec.sped.org. The free trial starts right away and allows you try out both the teacher and student portal of LCE.

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New Pricing Structure for CEC and CASE Memberships

As WCASS members, I (Gary Myrah) encourage you to join CASE to broaden your perspective of issues related to special education. To belong to CASE, you also need to belong to CEC since CASE is a division of CEC. CEC has renovated their pricing structure with hopes of having a tiered system that will accommodate more people. Below are the three levels available.

An option that directors are looking at is the school/school district packages that incorporate additional memberships for teachers. This package also includes limited free registration for the CEC conference in April. It is advised that if you choose one of these packages you plan how you will award the teacher memberships to avoid disharmony in your district.

Membership Types

You can get your individual CEC membership one of three ways:

- [Premier](#) (our most expansive package with exclusive benefits)
- [Full](#) (offers all the benefits of Basic membership as well as special professional development and topical information)
- [Basic](#) (featuring the most-requested CEC member benefits at our lowest price)

These Xceptional options will be available in mid-July 2014.

Students receive 20% off any individual membership rate.

Looking for group membership? Check out our [School/School District Package](#) with special savings - coming fall 2014!

Also as a CASE member you will be able to have extra benefits and services from the vendors of the CASE endorsed products. If you would like to see a list of these benefits, please contact Gary Myrah.

Interested in Becoming Involved in WCASS or CASE?

As many of you are aware, I (Gary Myrah) have begun my role as president-elect of CASE. If you have had an interest in becoming involved at a national level, please contact me. There are opportunities to participate on existing committees or possibly even move into a chair position in two years when I become president. Involvement in WCASS and CASE provides a greater perspective than the issues you are facing at a local level. It is also a way to rejuvenate yourself when you are able to leave the district for a day and work with colleagues that are facing the same issues.

Also do not believe you lack qualifications or experience. Many of us on the Board of Directors started serving very early in our career. Most of our Board of Directors comes from small or medium sized school districts. At the CASE level we have members from throughout the nation, some serving very small school districts (like in Alaska or Montana) as well as very large districts (with student enrollments exceeding 40,000).

Kurt Eley is committed to seeking out people that are young and interested in becoming involved. We recognize we need an array of leaders to remain vibrant and successful. We are also hoping to encourage more directors to participate in the CASE Leadership Summit. It is a great experience and you will not be alone. Our Wisconsin delegation visits our congressmen and senators as a group, with everyone having an opportunity to express their concerns.

WCASS Upcoming Training Dates & Events

August 5th & 6th Academy for New Special Education Leadership: 2 days at Madison Marriott West, Middleton

August 7th & 8th WSPA Summer Institute on School Safety: 2 days at Madison Marriott West, Middleton (see page 11 of newsletter for further details)

October 14th & 15th State Superintendent's Conference on Special Education & Pupil Services Leadership Issues: 2 days at Wilderness Hotel, Wisconsin Dells

February 4th-6th WCASS Winter Conference: 3 days at Radisson Paper Valley Hotel, Appleton

February 17th & 18th Wisconsin Federal Funding Conference: 2 days, Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells

Please visit our website at <http://m360.wcass.org/calendar.aspx>

Open Enrollment Discussions: There continues to be discussions with the WDPI, parent representatives, WASB, SAA and WCASS regarding modifications for open enrollment. The concern stems from parents of children with disabilities that have been denied opportunities for open enrolling their children in another district. We are working on ways to minimize or eliminate the issues surrounding "undue financial burden." There will still be provisions that will limit open enrollment related to space in the receiving district's program. We are hoping to have resolution prior to the start of the school year.

**Thank you to our
Spring Conference sponsors!**

*Cookout beverages and
Thursday breakfast sponsored by*



Networking social sponsored by



Lanyards sponsored by



Flash drives sponsored by



Golf prizes sponsored by



Wisconsin School Psychologists Association Presents

A Special 2-Day Conference on School Safety

Speakers: Dr. Melissa Reeves & Dr. Steven Brock

August 7-8, 2014 at the Madison Marriott West in Middleton, WI

Information and Registration: <http://www.uwlax.edu/conted/wspa/summerhome.html>

Threat/ Risk Assessment: Developing a Proactive and Consistent Approach to Evaluating Risk (1/2 day)

This workshop will focus on the process and procedures needed to establish a consistent school/district-wide approach to threat and suicide risk assessment. Critical factors discussed will include: current statistics and legal cases, early identification of warning signs, primary prevention strategies to "break the code of silence; an overview of risk assessment models; assessment procedures; and strategies for interventions, postventions, and working with difficult parents. Case study examples and forms will be shared to illustrate the process.

Advanced Skills in School-Based Crisis Prevention and Intervention (1/2 day)

This advanced level workshop will assist you in enhancing the crisis procedures already in place in your school district. Specifically, learn cutting-edge tips on conducting crisis exercises and drills in the school setting. In addition, strategies for using social media, dealing with the press, and planning memorials will be offered. The legal ramifications of crisis response and the spiritual dimensions in the aftermath of a crisis also will be highlighted.

Suicide Assessment and Intervention: Critical Skills for School Psychologists (full day)

This workshop will discuss the essential processes and procedures needed to establish quality suicide prevention programs through postvention activities. Critical factors discussed will include: current statistics and legal cases, early identification of warning signs, primary prevention strategies to "break the code of silence"; an overview of suicide assessment models and procedures; and strategies for intervention and postvention activities. Case study examples and forms will be shared to illustrate the process with the school psychologist (school-based mental health professional) taking a leadership role.

Special WSPA Professional Development Certificate in Crisis Preparedness and Response is available to individuals that complete both days of the Summer Institute along with PREPaRE I and PREPaRE II training.

Graduate Credit Available

If you have any questions about this learning opportunity, please contact me.

Robert J. Dixon, PhD, NCSP, LP

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